February 20, 2013 | Addiction [1]
By Enrico Suardi, MD [2], Erminia Scarcella, MD [3], and Ranieri Guerra, MD [4]

The Embassy of Italy in Washington, DC recently hosted the first of 2 workshops on “Leaders and Terrorists: Psychological Perspectives on National Security.”

The well-attended symposium drew upon the growing interest in exploring and utilizing all the elements of national power, including so-called “soft power”—the ability to attract and persuade others in order to influence their behavior and obtain desired outcomes. A high-level panel highlighted the role of psychological insights in promoting national security and peace, and how understanding human behavior is key to preventing and mitigating the consequences of the worst human behavior.

In his opening remarks, the Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission, Minister Luca Franchetti-Pardo, emphasized the close collaboration of Italy and the US in the complex scenarios of global and domestic security.

In his talk on Tailored Deterrence: The Requirement for Nuanced Leader Profiles in the Post Cold-War Era, Jerrold Post, MD, Professor of Psychiatry and International Relations at George Washington University, previously the founding director of the CIA Center for the Analysis of Personality and Political Behavior, discussed the importance of team work and interagency coordination.

Ronald Schouten JD, MD, discussed The Role of Behavioral Science in Understanding Threats to National Security, offering a sobering review of the strengths and limitations of the field. He is the Director of the Law and Psychiatry Service at Massachusetts General Hospital and Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, a member of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence Biological Sciences Expert Group.

In Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis: Navigating National Security through the Straits of Critical Incident Analysis, Gregory Saathoff, MD, Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine and Public Health at the University of Virginia Medical School, Executive Director of the Critical Incident Analysis Group, a consultant to the FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit, underscored the importance of team work and interagency coordination.
Reporting on the outcomes of programs aimed at terrorist reeducation and rehabilitation Arie Kruglanski, PhD, presented *The Quest for Significance as the Underlying Motivation for Terrorism*. Dr Kruglanski is Distinguished Professor of Psychology and co-principal investigator at the National Center for the Study of Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism at the University of Maryland.

In *The Grey Zone: Aiding and Abetting Terrorism. A Comparative Analysis on Behaviours and Legislations*, The Hon. Judge Giannicola Sinisi, Attach for Legal Affairs at the Embassy of Italy and a former Member of the Italian Parliament, utilized his philosophical and legal knowledge to address the fundamental issue of balancing liberty and security.

In conclusion, Mr Guido Olimpio, author and journalist, senior international correspondent from Washington, DC, for the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, shared observations and perspectives based on over 30 years of experience in the field around the world.

The authors of this article organized the symposium.

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